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PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1992-1997

MAJOR PROGRAMME IV. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Programme 46. Sustainable development

1. The preparation, format and content of the medium-term plan and its revisions are governed by the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

2. Regulation 3.11 provides, inter alia, that the medium-term plan shall be revised as necessary every two years to incorporate required programme changes and that the proposed revisions shall be as detailed as required to incorporate the programme implications of the resolutions and decisions adopted by the intergovernmental organs or international conferences since the adoption of the plan.

3. The proposed programme 46, Sustainable development, reflects the outcome of the intergovernmental process initiated by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It replaces subprogramme 5, Development and the environment, of programme 12, Global development issues and policies, of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/253 of 21 December 1990 and subsequently revised by the Assembly in its resolution 47/214 of 23 December 1992 and issued in document A/47/6/Rev.1 and Corr.1. The programme also incorporates subprogramme 3, Coordination and harmonization of activities of the United Nations system on science and technology for sustainable development, of programme 17, Science and technology for development.

PROGRAMME 46. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A. Programme

1. General orientation

46.1 The general objectives and orientation of this programme are derived from General Assembly resolution 47/190 of 22 December 1992, which endorsed the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21 and the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests, as adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development on 14 June 1992. Furthermore, the General Assembly, in its resolution 47/191 of 22 December 1992 on institutional arrangements to follow up the Conference, recommended the establishment of a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development, as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with Article 68 of the Charter of the United Nations in order to ensure effective follow-up to the Conference, as well as to enhance international cooperation and rationalize the intergovernmental decision-making capacity for the integration of environment and development issues and to examine the progress of the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national, regional and international levels. Subsequently, by its decision 1993/207, the Economic and Social Council established the Commission with the functions recommended by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/191. The Commission on Sustainable Development provides overall direction to the work under this programme. The Commission meets annually and submits its reports and recommendations to the Economic and Social Council and, through it, to the Assembly.

46.2 In its resolution 47/191, the General Assembly also called upon the Secretary-General to establish within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development a clearly identifiable, highly qualified and competent secretariat support structure to provide support for the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development and the High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development.

46.3 The Commission on Sustainable Development, at its first session, approved its multi-year thematic programme of work for the period 1993-1997. This thematic programme integrates 40 chapters of Agenda 21 in the following nine thematic clusters: (a) critical elements of sustainability (including matters related to trade and environment); sustainable consumption; combating poverty; demographic dynamics and sustainability; (b) financial resources and mechanisms; (c) education, science, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, cooperation and capacity-building; (d) decision-making structures; (e) role of major groups; (f) health, human settlements and freshwater; (g) land, desertification, forests and biodiversity; (h) atmosphere, oceans and all kinds of seas; and (i) toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes. The Commission decided that clusters (a) to (e), which are broadly cross-sectoral in nature, would be considered by the Commission annually, while clusters (f) to (i), which are broadly sectoral in nature, would be considered on a multi-year basis. In 1997, the Commission will undertake an overall review of the progress achieved in the

implementation of Agenda 21 with a view to preparing for the special session of the General Assembly envisaged in Assembly resolution 47/190.

46.4 The Commission further decided that, in its deliberations under thematic clusters included in the multi-year programme of work, it would ensure an integrated approach to environment and development, taking full account of the principles of the Rio Declaration and all other aspects of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and of paragraph 4 of resolution 47/191, as well as of the cross-linkages between and among sectoral and cross-sectoral components of relevant chapters of Agenda 21.

46.5 The programme aims to provide substantive support to the Commission on Sustainable Development for the monitoring of the implementation of Agenda 21, by reviewing progress and identifying issues to be brought to the attention of the Commission for its consideration. The programme also aims to promote cooperation and coordination among the organizations of the United Nations system in the implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21 and to enhance a dialogue with other international, regional and bilateral organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations, including the private sector.

46.6 The orientation of the programme reflects the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council at its session in July 1994:

> "The Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development, adopted in 1979, provides a basis and a useful benchmark for the United Nations system to assess programmes, enhance coordination and policy development at both the intergovernmental and the inter-agency level. At the same time, Agenda 21, adopted in 1992, provides a new opportunity and an instrument to revitalize and coordinate the programmes and activities of the United Nations system in the field of science and technology. The system of task managers established by the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development of the Administrative Committee on Coordination provides a particularly promising mechanism for bringing organizations of the United Nations system together in order to strengthen ongoing activities, develop new initiatives and coordinate specific science and technology programmes in the context of implementing the mandates of Agenda 21."

2. Overall strategy

46.7 Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration and the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests provide an overall framework to further global cooperation on environment and development issues among States, key societal actors and people. Agenda 21 provides a policy and programmatic basis to tackle in an integrated fashion the three critical elements of sustainable development: poverty, demographic dynamics and consumption, and production patterns. It also specifies the means necessary to achieve its objectives, including financial resources and technology transfer and cooperation requirements. Agenda 21 also provides an overall framework for the establishment of new and equitable partnerships at the international,

regional and national levels between Governments and States and non-State actors for the achievement of sustainable development.

46.8 The link between environment and development involves much more than the environmentally sound management of the natural resource base. Preserving and protecting the ecological equilibrium is a vital component of human development, indeed, of human survival. There is need to target specific policies in order to ensure that environmental values are properly reflected in economic activities. To that end, public and private enterprises must be held accountable for the environmental impact of their activities. Governments must take the lead in formulating policies and pursuing development strategies that encourage environmentally sound development.

46.9 The main task of the programme is to assist Member States and the Commission on Sustainable Development and its inter-sessional subsidiary bodies in monitoring the progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 and other outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and in elaborating policy recommendations on sustainable development issues for the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council. Studies will be undertaken for the preparation of analytical reports on the cross-sectoral and sectoral components of Agenda 21. The Secretariat will also conduct workshops and expert consultations, publish and disseminate information and cooperate with other organizational units, Governments, relevant international organizations within and outside the United Nations system, including multilateral financial institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations and major groups, on issues related to follow-up to the Conference and sustainable development in general. The Secretariat will also undertake analytical studies aimed at identifying issues requiring priority attention, based on information provided by Governments, organizations and other sources, with a view to formulating recommendations for consideration by the Commission on Sustainable Development. Furthermore, information submitted by Governments on their activities to implement Agenda 21, progress achieved and problems encountered, will be analysed and assessed by the Secretariat and included in the reports to the Commission.

46.10 Through the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development, the Secretariat will provide a forum for the formulation of concerted policies and strategies to the programmes and activities of the organizations of the United Nations system. Regular contacts are also being pursued with relevant non-governmental organizations and representatives of major groups identified in Agenda 21 on issues of concern to the Commission on Sustainable Development.

46.11 The High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development will also give broad consideration to issues related to the implementation of Agenda 21, provide expert advice to the Secretary-General and through him to the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

46.12 Under this programme the Secretariat will also carry out functions and activities emanating from the decisions and recommendations of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Barbados Declaration. Work will include provision of substantive

secretariat support, including the preparation of analytical reports, to the Commission on Sustainable Development to assist the Commission in carrying out its functions related to the monitoring and review of the progress achieved in the implementation of the Programme of Action and promoting effective follow-up to the Global Conference.

46.13 The programme will be the responsibility of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. In implementing the programme, the Department will draw upon and cooperate with all relevant organizational entities.

B. Subprogramme

SUBPROGRAMME. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

(a) Objectives

46.14 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 44/228, 47/190 and 47/191, and the decisions of the first and second sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development approved by the Economic and Social Council. In relation to coordination of science and technology in the United Nations system, the most recent legislative authority derives from General Assembly resolution 48/179 and Economic and Social Council resolutions 1993/71 and 1993/72.

46.15 The objective of the subprogramme is to provide the Commission and its ad hoc inter-sessional working groups with periodic assessments of progress in the implementation of the recommendations contained in Agenda 21 and other outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and to highlight issues and elaborate policy proposals requiring the attention of the Commission with a view to enabling it to formulate policy recommendations for further action aimed at achieving sustainable development.

46.16 The subprogramme also aims at promoting concerted approaches among the organizations of the United Nations system, in the implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21 and the decisions and recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. Through the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development, particular attention will be given to the formulation of common inter-agency strategies, the exchange of information and the promotion of joint agency activities and programmes.

46.17 The subprogramme also seeks to broaden a dialogue on sustainable development issues between the organizations of the United Nations system and other international, regional and bilateral organizations, including those related to finance and trade, as well as non-governmental organizations and major groups, such as women, youth, indigenous people, local authorities, the scientific and business communities, and others.

46.18 The subprogramme will also seek to strengthen the role of the organizations of the United Nations system in harmonizing and integrating programmes and policies on science and technology for sustainable development.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

46.19 Emphasis will be given to assisting the Commission in the monitoring and review of provisions of Agenda 21 related to critical elements of sustainability, such as the need for a supportive economic environment, combating poverty, achieving sustainable consumption and production patterns and lifestyles, and limiting demographic impacts on the life-supporting capacity of the planet. In cooperation with the UNCTAD secretariat, in particular, the Department will assist the Commission in its review of progress and developments in the area of trade, environment and sustainable development with a view to identifying possible gaps and to promoting cooperation and coordination among all parties involved.

46.20 In the area of finance, the primary focus of the work will be related to assisting the Commission on Sustainable Development in the monitoring and review of financial aspects of the implementation of Agenda 21, particularly provisions and commitments contained in chapter 33. Financial resources and mechanisms, as well as in assessment of specific financial needs and priorities related to sectoral components of Agenda 21, taking into account the Commission's multi-year thematic programme of work.

46.21 The Secretariat will make assessments and formulate proposals for the Commission on Sustainable Development and its ad hoc inter-sessional working group on finance regarding ways and means of mobilizing new and additional financial resources for sustainable development, raising the effectiveness of existing financial mechanisms and funding sources such as official development assistance, improving access to capital markets and debt relief, policies related to environmental taxes and subsidies, market-based instruments and private sector financial mechanisms, as well as other means.

46.22 An important area of work will be to assist the Commission in the monitoring and review of the implementation of cross-sectoral components of Agenda 21 related to education, science, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, cooperation and capacity-building, in particular in relation to sectoral programme areas of Agenda 21.

46.23 Another important area of work will be to coordinate the substantive input to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development by, inter alia, organizing consultative meetings and promoting a coalition of resources in support of science and technology within the United Nations system. In addition, measures for improving coordination at the inter-agency level will include the formulation of common approaches and the designation of focal points for science and technology in the organizations and agencies of the system with a view to sharing information and ensuring that issues related to science and technology for sustainable development are reflected in the discussions of the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development and the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions.

46.24 Special emphasis will be given to providing substantive support for the Panel on Technology for Sustainable Development of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. Support will also be provided to the Economic and Social Council in reporting on and monitoring the coordination of science and technology within the United Nations system through studies and joint activities.

46.25 Section II of Agenda 21 refers to questions related to the conservation and management of resources for development. Issues considered in this section are contained in chapters 9 to 22. These chapters deal with the following sectoral areas: protection of the atmosphere; integrated approach to the planning and management of land resources; combating deforestation; managing fragile ecosystems: combating desertification and drought; managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development; promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development; conservation of biological diversity; environmentally sound management of biotechnology; protection of the oceans and seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, and coastal areas and the protection, rational use and development of their living resources; protection of the quality and supply of freshwater resources: application of integrated approaches to the development, management and use of water resources; environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals, including prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products; environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes, including prevention of illegal international traffic of hazardous wastes; environmentally sound management of solid wastes and sewage-related issues; and safe and environmentally sound management of radioactive wastes.

46.26 Though much analytical and practical work on most of these issues is carried out by the United Nations under other programmes of the medium-term plan, as well as by organizations of the United Nations system, work within this subprogramme will concentrate on promoting integration of relevant cross-sectoral and sectoral components of Agenda 21. Particular emphasis will be devoted in this context to measures enabling the Commission on Sustainable Development to elaborate appropriate policy approaches as regards financing, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, cooperation and capacity-building, institutions, human development and consumption relevant to these sectors with a view to achieving an optimal mix of economic, social and regulatory instruments and policies.

46.27 Coordinated approaches among the organizations of the United Nations system are promoted through the Inter-agency Committee for Sustainable Development, for which the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development provides secretariat support and services. Specific organizations have been assigned the function of task manager for each chapter with a view to ensuring a concerted implementation of the relevant recommendations. In the case of freshwater resources, coordination is carried out through the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Water Resources, which in turn reports to the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development. The Subcommittee acts, inter alia, as the task manager for chapter 18 of Agenda 21. Similarly, the recently established Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Oceans acts as task manager for chapter 17. A broader dialogue with other international, regional and bilateral organizations as well as with

non-governmental organizations is established through the task managers. The Secretariat provides central policy guidance in bringing about a concerted approach to all relevant activities.

46.28 The Secretariat, in close cooperation with the relevant organizations of the system, will monitor progress by international organizations and Governments in the implementation of Agenda 21 and other outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and will analyse issues that need to be brought to the attention of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

46.29 Emphasis will be given to assisting the Commission in carrying out its functions related to consideration of information provided by Governments, including, for example, in the form of periodic communications or national reports regarding the activities they undertake to implement Agenda 21, the problems they face, such as problems related to financial resources and technology transfer, and other environment and development issues they find relevant.

46.30 The Secretariat will review and analyse the information received from Governments, intergovernmental bodies, and organizations of the United Nations system on the cross-sectoral and sectoral issues mentioned in paragraph 46.3 above with a view to monitoring progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 through action at the national level.

46.31 Furthermore, the Secretariat will develop appropriate methodologies, including indicators, to monitor progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and transition towards sustainable development. This work will be done in close cooperation with the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis and relevant international organizations.

46.32 Under this subprogramme, emphasis will also be given to facilitating the access of Governments and non-State actors to information in electronic form on activities related to the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, including all activities relevant to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. This will contribute directly to the objective of establishing and strengthening electronic networking capabilities by the organs and organizations of the United Nations system in conformity with paragraph 40.25 of Agenda 21.